

To: Mayor Barbara Buffaloe
City Council Members: Lisa E.A. Meyer, Roy Lovelady, Nick Foster, Donald Waterman, and Betsy Peters

From: City of Columbia Commission on Cultural Affairs

Date: May 13, 2024

Re: Artist Nick Cave Recognition

Dear Mayor Buffaloe and Members of the City Council:

The Cultural Affairs Commissioners would like to introduce an idea for which we simply seek your approval to proceed with our inquiries. No funding is required at this point, though funding may be sought in the future, in partnership with other entities.

We would like to find a way for the City to recognize one of the country's most globally renowned and respected contemporary visual artists, whose work is in almost constant exhibition, and who is a graduate of our own Columbia Public School system: the eminent Nick Cave.

Based in Chicago, Nick was born in Fulton but moved to Columbia at the age of 12 and attended Hickman High School. His mother still lives in Columbia.

He is most famous for his incredible sound suits, works of body-camouflaging art that conceal race, gender and class; kinetic sound-producing, protective second skins that force the viewer to look without judgment; works that he was inspired to create following the beating of Rodney King in 1991. Today his 500+ sound suits are in museums around the world from Sydney to Stockholm.

In 2022, the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art created a career-spanning retrospective of his work, a show which subsequently moved to the Guggenheim in New York. Also completed in 2022 was a massive 4500 sq. ft. permanent mosaic installation of his work in a subway connector beneath Times Square in NYC.

In addition to his extraordinary oeuvre of artworks, a cornerstone of Nick's practice and philosophy is to take art to the people rather than simply showing it in places that are perceived to be exclusive. He is truly a community artist, engaging communities around the country in projects that seek their creative input and thought-provoking engagement.

We would like to find a way to honor Nick here in Columbia. He cites one of his major influences as his Hickman art teacher, Lois Mikrut (now retired). It is hard to find a contemporary artist who does as much as Nick Cave to foster understanding, challenge injustices, engage communities, and make us think. And he is an alum of our school system. We would like to find a way to celebrate him here, in his hometown.

At this point we wish simply to introduce you to the idea and seek your support to pursue a conversation with Mr. Cave. At its simplest, we might honor him with a ceremony and plaque at Hickman High School to recognize its famous alum. At its most elaborate, it would be to invite – and fund a community project with Nick Cave that could incorporate Columbia Public Schools

and the University of Missouri. Mr. Cave has an incredibly busy schedule so we anticipate that any potential art project might not happen for a couple of years.

I hope this is a project that both we as a City, and as a Council will be excited to support. Nick Cave is incredibly deserving of our recognition.

Sincerely,

The Commissioners of
The Commission on Cultural Affairs – City of Columbia

David Spear, Chair
Jim Little, Vice Chair
Kristin Gadsden, Secretary
Cameron Dorth
Molly Froidl
Lee Ann Garrison
Linda Helmick
James Melton
Diana Moxon
Kathy Murphy
Stacey Thompson

Cc: De'Carlton Seewood, City Manager